

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as indicated below, without prejudice:

1-143. (Canceled)

144. (Original) A spinal fixation device comprising:

a connecting member having a female-tapered first through-passage formed therein, said connecting member further having internal sidewalls defining said first through-passage, said first through-passage tapering outwardly in a proximal-to-distal direction, said connecting member further comprising a second through-passage formed therein, the first through-passage and the second through-passage being configured and dimensioned to define a first axis and a second axis, respectively, wherein said first and second axes are not co-linear, and together cooperatively form an angle greater than zero degrees; and

a fastening member configured and dimensioned to penetrate a pedicle, said fastening member having a male-tapered external portion that tapers outwardly in a proximal-to-distal direction, said male-tapered external portion having a female-threaded recess formed therein and being configured and dimensioned to mate with the sidewalls defining the first through-passage in frictional engagement therewith;

wherein the female-threaded recess is disposed in alignment with the second through-passage of the connecting member when the male-tapered external portion of the fastening member is disposed in engagement with the first through-passage of the connecting member, to thereby enable a fastener to pass through said second through-passage and into said female-threaded recess.

145. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, wherein the male-tapered portion has a first end a second end and is longer than the female-tapered first through-passage such that the second end of the male-tapered portion extends beyond said female-tapered first through-passage when said male-tapered portion is matingly engaged with the sidewalls defining the first through-passage in frictional engagement.

146. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, wherein the device further comprises an elongate support member, said support member having a bend formed therein such that said elongate support member has a first, longer portion and a second, shorter portion.

147. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 146, wherein the connecting member further comprises a gripping member having a concave sidewall defining an aperture formed therethrough

allowing the elongate support member to pass through said aperture, wherein said gripping member grips said elongate support member and thereby locks said elongate support member in a location relative to the bone when said connecting member is in a clamped position.

148. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, the fastening member further comprises a first side and a second side with a mid collar separating the first side from the second side, the second side being threaded for attaching the fastening member to the bone.

149. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, wherein the connecting member further comprises a lower portion and an upper portion, the lower portion being configured and dimensioned such that said lower portion is at least twice the size of the upper portion.

150. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, the device further comprises an elongate support member and a stem member having a stem portion, the elongate support member and the stem portion having equal diameters such that one connecting member may be selectively attached to either said elongate support member or said stem portion.

151. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, the device having a disengaging means for disengaging and releasing the frictional engagement to thereby cause the release of said male-tapered external portion from said female-tapered first through-passage of the connecting member.

152. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, the device having a stem portion and an aligning means for aligning the fastening member and the stem portion to thereby cause said fastening member to be positioned in a substantially orthogonal position with respect to said stem portion when said fastening member is attached to the bone.

153. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, wherein the fastening member further comprises a head, said head being formed collectively of a first head portion and a second head portion.

154. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 153, wherein the first head portion may be configured as a cylindrical portion and formed on top of the second head portion, and wherein the second head portion may be configured as a tapered portion.

155. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 154, wherein the first head portion has a recess formed therein.

156. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 153, wherein the first head portion may be configured as a tapered portion and formed on top of the second head portion, and wherein the second head portion may be configured as a cylindrical portion.

157. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 156, wherein the first head portion has a recess formed therein.

158. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, wherein the fastening member further comprises a head, said head being formed collectively of a first head portion and a second head portion, both the first head portion and the second head portion being tapered.

159. (Original) The spinal fixation device of claim 144, wherein the fastening member further comprises a head, said head being formed collectively of a first head portion and a second head portion, both the first head portion and the second head portion being substantially cylindrical.

160 - 192. (Canceled)